

House Bill 533  
February 21, 2013  
Presented by Bruce Rich  
House Fish, Wildlife and Parks Committee

Mr. Chairperson and committee members, I am Bruce Rich, Fisheries Division Administrator, for the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP). I am here today on behalf of the Director in support of House Bill 533.

HB 533 would expand the scope of the Bull Trout and Cutthroat Trout Enhancement Program to include all native fish species in Montana. The Bull Trout and Cutthroat Trout Enhancement Program, established during the 1999 Montana Legislature, directed the Department to restore habitats and spawning areas and reduce species competition through its Future Fisheries Improvement Program exclusively for Montana's bull trout and cutthroat trout. Bull trout are federally listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act and cutthroat trout are listed as a species of special concern in Montana. However, the need for aquatic habitat restoration in Montana goes well beyond bull trout and cutthroat trout waters. There are 54 additional native fish species in Montana (species ranging from Arctic grayling to sauger to pearl dace) that currently cannot benefit from this Program. HB 533 would expand the existing Program to include all native fish in Montana, widening habitat restoration opportunities to benefit essentially all Montana waters. Coexisting non-native fish also could benefit from expansion of the Program. All proposed projects would continue to receive review from the Citizen Future Fisheries Review panel and final funding approval by the FWP Commission. The Bull Trout and Cutthroat Trout Enhancement Program is a significant segment of the overall Future Fisheries Improvement Program. Approximately \$13.7 million program and \$36.9 million in matching funds, totaling over \$50 million, have been used to undertake aquatic habitat restoration in Montana since inception of the Future Fisheries Improvement Program in 1996. The Future Fisheries Improvement Program has benefited Montana's anglers through improved fishing opportunities, landowners through enhanced property values, and commerce through added business opportunities. These entities, as well as Montana's coldwater and warmwater fisheries, would further benefit from the passage of this bill.

**FUTURE FISHERIES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM  
COMPLETE SUMMARY (as of 1-28-2013)**

Years Program has been in effect: 17

Number of Projects approved by FWP Commission: 638

Number of Approved Projects Cancelled by Applicants: 101

Number of Approved Projects Pending or Ongoing: 37

Number of Approved Projects Completed: 500

Future Fisheries Dollars Approved by FWP Commission: \$13,691,844.00

Matching Dollars associated with Approved Future Fisheries Dollars: \$36,863,530.00

Future Fisheries Dollars Expended on Approved Projects: \$10,374,302.00

Completed Future Fisheries Projects have:

Installed 177 miles of riparian fencing

Restored and enhanced 184 miles of stream/river channel

Installed 42 fish screens on irrigation diversions

Provided for upstream fish passage at 61 irrigation diversions

Enhanced upstream fish passage at 76 road crossings

Increased instream flow by about 168 cubic feet per second

Secured and protected native species of special concern on 29 waters

Enhanced spawning and rearing habitat on lakes/reservoirs at 50 locations

Enhanced habitat for westslope cutthroat trout, Yellowstone cutthroat trout, bull trout, redband trout, rainbow trout, brown trout, brook trout, mountain whitefish, arctic grayling, walleye, yellow perch, sauger, smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, channel catfish, tiger muskellunge and numerous species of native and non-native non-game fish

Note: Does not includes 1995 T&Y earmarked project (\$510,000 committed and expended)